

From: John B. Cooper Greenwich, CT
Re: In Support of H.B. 6355
Date: 03/03/20201

Dear Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is John Cooper. I am a resident of Greenwich and a longtime supporter of Gun Violence Prevention.

I am writing in support of H.B. 6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders or Warrants. I support this bill because modernizing our current red flag law is a common-sense measure that can save lives. Some laws are endlessly applicable and some need to change with the knowledge learned from implementing them over time.

I am proud that Connecticut was one of the first states to enact a risk warrant law in 1999; this law allows law enforcement to intervene and remove firearms from individuals who they believe are at risk of harming themselves or others. H.B. 5448 is simply seeking to amend and modernize the law that already exists in Connecticut.

The most notable change to the current law is to allow family and household members to directly petition the court to issue an Extreme Risk Protection Order ("ERPO"). Under current law, only law enforcement officials can do this, and only after conducting an independent investigation. Family members of people in crisis are denied direct access to the red flag process because they are unable to directly request an order from the court. Those who may first recognize dangerous warning signs are thereby deprived of a chance to utilize this life saving tool. An ERPO is designed to intervene during a crisis, when time is of the essence; eliminating the middleman and allowing family members to approach the courts themselves will save precious time.

The involvement of law enforcement is an issue of significance for communities in which residents may not feel comfortable approaching the police. An amended red flag law gives them a chance to go directly to the court and translates into lives saved. Moreover, in the case of a potential suicide, some might believe that this is private, and not a matter in which to involve law enforcement. On average, someone dies from suicide every 3 days in our state; an improvement to the existing risk warrant law would empower family members to temporarily remove guns from loved ones who could be a risk to themselves.

Please support H.B. 6335. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

John B. Cooper
Greenwich, CT